III

The Yemeni Coast in 1005/1597; An Anonymous Note on the Flyleaf of Ibn al-Mujāwir's *Tārīkh al-Mustabṣir*

Immediately following the Aya Sofia text of Ibn al-Mujāwir's *Tārīkh al-mustabṣir* (fol. 119a)[1] comes a note which I copied in Istanbul in 1963. I am indebted to Professor O. Löfgren both for permission to publish the text with translation of this note and for supplying me with his own copy and draft notes certain of which I have incorporated in my own. The note is written in semi-colloquial Arabic, by a man not unacquainted with writing but certainly no grammarian, although for that matter Ibn al-Mujāwir himself, to judge by the Ms. text before us was not impeccable in this respect either. No attempt has been made to force the Arabic of the note into a classical mould, but it is simply left as it is.

اخبرنى الخواجا الاجل الاكرم اتكير[1] رخيم بن المعلم احمد رخيم
وكان رجلًا ممن مضت عليه التجارب وكان ابوه المعلم احمد يسافر
فى المراكب معلم الحقّه وكان صاحب دنيا واسعه اخبرنى الخواجا
ايكسر[1] رخيم ليلة الإثنين عشرين شهر ذى الحجة سنة ١٠٠٥
وكان قد ناهض من العمر ثلاثه وستين سنه وكان رجلًا صادقًا
مِمَّن يُنَقْ[2] به وكنا واصلين من المجبا حجبات[3] بندر المخا فجرا
بيننا كلام فسألتُهُ متى صارت المراكب تدخل بندر المخا فذكر
لى ان بعد خراب بندر عدن اى نطل الموسم وقلّ دُخول المراكب
اليها مثل ما ذكر بن مُجاوِر فى تاريخه انه كان يدخلها اول نجم
لطاية من المراكب بل ازيد فلما حدث فيها الظلم انتقل الموسم
الى بندر جدّه وبندر الخور والجزيره ايضا بين سماد وبين القصير[4]
من (اعمال)[5] بندر الحُدَيْدَه واما الان الجزيره خراب وقد شاهدت
انا الجزيره بعينى سنه ١٠٠٣ لان كان سبب رواحى الى هذاك
المكان لانه خرج بَتّان جمت طوله اربعه وثلاثين ذراع وعرضه

اربعه عشر ذراع وعرض كل عين الى دورتها ثلاثه عشر شبر وكنت
انا والنقيب محمد والقاضى عبد الوهاب ويوسف تابع الجناب الحاج باقوت
فلما وصلنا الى هذاك المكان راينا البتان قد عرى[6] ما بين جزر
هناك وبين البر الذى نحن فيه اى سُمَاد فقال اصحابنا ارجعوا
بنا[7] البتان قد عَرِى والبلاد بها لانى كنت ذاك الأوان حاضرها
فما سمعت كلامهم وتقدمنا ورقدنا فما قمت الا والبتان قد
خرج البر لان اول عند وصولنا كان البحر عارى لاجل ذالك
عرى الحوت فلما أمتلأ البحر اخرجه الموج الى البر فقمت أُريق
الما فرأيت البتان قد خرج فرجعنا الى عنده نتفرج فلما رجعنا
الى البلاد ذكر لى النقيب محمد ان هذه الجزيره كان فيها قوم ومعهم
جلاب تدخل الهند واهل الحور كذلك كان معهم جلاب
تدخل الهند وناتيهم[8] من القماش مثل الدوتى واللاتى[9] والكندكى
والعطب وغيره الى ان حدث الظلم فى البلاد وراح الحسم وبقى الاسم
فصارت المراكب تدخل بندر جده وكانة[10] الدولة الاشرفيه الملك
الاشرف ابو مظهر وكان تحتهم مدينة تعز. فصار يدخل المراكب
والمراكبين[11] الى بندر الحما الى ان صار يدخل الأربعين والسبعين
وكانت الحما هذاك الأوان اعنى ضمانها خمسه[12] ١٥٠٠ الى ان
وصلت فى زماننا هذا ثمانية وعشرين الف ذهب وما بقى يدخلها
الا سبعه عشر الى عشرين لا زايد واما الحور وهذيك الجزيره الذى
ذكرناها قد فنيوا[13] اهلها ومدفونين قبال الجزيره فى مكان معروف
بالحبانه وهو محل معروف يتعدى عليها المسافر الى الزيديه والى الصفى
وطريق ساحليه الى الصليف والى اللحيه وقد سلكتها انا مرارا
لله الحمد من قبل ومن بعد واما الحما فهى قديمه هكذا
اخبرنى القدر الاجل اكبر رخيم فى التاريخ المذكور والله اعلم
فى ٢٠ شهر ذى الحجه سنه ١٠٠٥.

Marginal note 2

واما عدن فبقى يدخلها فى زماننا هذا نحو المركب والمركبين
مثل التواهى مراكب صغار مليباريه نقط والبلد خراب
فاذا غضب على احدًا[14] جعلوه فيها والرهابين وغيرهم نعوذ
بالله ...

Notes to text

1 Löfgren corrects to Iykur.
2 Properly *yūthaq*.
3 Löfgren reads *majbāt*.
4 Löfgren reads Quṣayr.
5 *A'māl* is written over the line.
6 Qāḍī Ismā'īl al-Akwa' read *'arrā*.
7 Though unlikely, *nabā* might be read – 'the news is that'.
8 The text seems to have *nātbhm* but tā'tī-him is clearly correct.
9 *Al-lāfī* may be read here, but *al-lātī* seems correct.
10 A not uncommon spelling error for *kānat*.
11 Löfgren reads *markabayn*.
12 *Ḥasanah is written over the figure.*
13 *Faniyū* = *fanū*, a common colloquial form.
14 Sic.

There told me the honourable the noble Khawājā Iykur Zikhkhīm[2] son of the Pilot Aḥmad Zikhkhīm, a man of those who have passed through [many] experiences. His father the Pilot Aḥmad used to voyage in vessels as the compass pilot (*mu'allim al-ḥuqqah*) and was possessed of ample world(ly wealth). The Khawājā Iykur Zikhkhīm told me on the night of Monday the 20th of the month of Dhu 'l-Ḥijjah of the year 1005 (4 August, 1597), he having come up to[3] 63 years of age, a truthful man – one of those who can be trusted, when we were coming from [collecting] the duty, the duties of Mocha bandar[4]. We fell into conversation and I asked him when vessels started to put into Mocha bandar and he mentioned to me that after the ruination of Aden bandar, i.e. the stopping of the trading fleet (*mūsim*[5]) and the paucity of vessels putting in to it – as Ibn Mujāwir remarks in his *History*[6], a hundred vessels used formerly to put into it, nay, more – but when the oppression[7] took place there the trading fleet transferred to Jeddah bandar and bandar al-Khawr and al-Jazīrah[8] also, between Sumād and al-Qaṣīrī/Quṣayrī[9] of the Ḥudaydah bandar districts, but nowadays al-Jazīrah is ruinous. I have seen al-Jazīrah myself with my own eyes in the year 1003/1594-5, because the reason for my going to that place was because a whale (*battān*[10]), a whale/fish[11] came in (to the shore), the length of which was 34 cubits, its breadth 14 cubits, and the width of each eye, i.e. its circumference (?[12]), was 13 spans (*shibr*[13]). I was with the *naqīb*[14] Muḥammad, the *qāḍī* 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Yūsuf, the follower of his worship al-Ḥājj Yāqūt, and when we reached that place we saw the whale stranded[15] between the islands there and the land where we were, i.e. Sumād. So my companions said: 'Let us go back; the whale is stranded and the village is poorly provided[16]', because at that time I was the governor (*ḥākim*) of it. But I did not listen[17] to what they were saying and we lunched and slept. No sooner did I get up but the whale had come in to the land for when we first arrived the tide was down[18] – because of that the whale got stranded – then when the tide was full the waves brought it in to the land. So I got up to pass water and saw the whale had come in so we went up to it to have a look. When we returned to the village the *naqīb* Muḥammad remarked to me that in this al-Jazīrah there used to be people with *jalabah*-dhows[19] entering India, and the people of al-Khawr likewise had *jalabah*-dhows entering India and bringing them cloth (*qumāsh*) like *dūtī*, *lātī*, *kandakī*[20] and cotton, etcetera, until oppression fell upon the village and the

body departed but the name remained – so vessels began to put in to Jeddah bandar. It was the Ashrafī dawlah, al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū Muṭahhar, their seat/capital (*takht*) being the city of Ta'izz[21]. So ships and sailors (*murākibīn*) began to put in to Mocha bandar till forty and seventy would put in there. Mocha at that time – I mean its tax farmed return (*ḍamān*) – was 15,000 good (gold pieces[22]) until, in this time of ours, it reached as many as 120,000 gold pieces (*dhahab*) though only 17 to 20 (vessels), no more, still put in to it. As for al-Khawr and that al-Jazīrah (Island) I have mentioned their inhabitants have passed away and are buried facing al-Jazīrah in a place known as al-Jabbānah (the Cemetery[23]), a well known place by which one passes when travelling to al-Zaydiyyah and al-Ḍaḥī and a coastal road to al-Ṣalīf and al-Luḥayyah – I have travelled it myself a number of times, praise God, before and since. As for Mocha it is ancient – so the illustrious Iykur Zikhkhīm told me, but God is most knowing, on the 20th of the month of Dhu 'l-Ḥijjah of the year 1005 (August 4th, 1597).

There are further, two marginal notes to the above account. The first says of Khawājā Iykur, 'As for his father Aḥmad he died in the year 1(000)/1591-2'. The second note is interesting:

> As for Aden in this time of ours, a vessel or two still puts in to it, (to such as al-Tawwāhī[24]), only small Malabarī vessels, and the town is ruinous. When anger is felt against a certain person[25] they post him there – and the hostages[26] and others – we take refuge in God [several only semi-legible words follow of a pious nature].

Comment

This note was penned during the first Ottoman occupation of the Yemen when Ottoman power seemed at its height, just one year before the Imām al-Qāsim al-Kabīr opened his *da'wah* or call, in the north, and during the governorship of Ḥasan Bāshā al-Wazīr (988-1013/1580-1604).

Mocha rose as Aden fell, owing to the exactions and mismanagement of the Ottoman officials, and this is repeated up to a point today for since 1967 Aden as a port has declined while Mocha and Ḥudaydah have increased in importance, though the fall of Aden is on a scale proportionately far less than during the first Ottoman occupation. Mocha is not mentioned by name in the Red Sea ports by the *Mulakhkhaṣ al-fiṭan* of 1411-12, and its revenues must have been relatively trivial. The same authority does not seem to refer either to the textiles from India imported to al-Khawr and al-Jazīrah.

It is curious that while the tax farming brought in to Mocha at this date no less than eight times its former revenue, the number of vessels had dropped to not more than 20. The revenues would be drawn mainly from customs and other port charges. The writer of the note mentions 15,000 gold pieces as the former revenue of Mocha – this might be compared with the list of expenditure of Sultanic affairs (*mühimme*) dated 990/1582 at Mocha, 16,439 gold pieces, out of a principal of 32,731[27], and the 120,000 gold pieces mentioned by our author. It would be interesting to see how these figures tally with the Ottoman archives.

Notes

1 Ed. Oscar Löfgren, *Descriptio Arabiae Meridionalis*, Leiden, 1951-54.
2 Löfgren cites Steingass, *Persian-English dict. aygar* (Greek *'akoron*, sweet cane; Dozy, *Supplément, iykur*; Berggren, 826, *Acorus, Calamus off.*; and Dozy, *zikhkhīm, fort* (*odeur*) – the name then meaning 'strong-smelling sweet cane'. This is not like Yemeni names, and perhaps the family was of Indian or Persian extraction. This seems superior to my reading *Atkyr/A.kr*, and makes sense, though strange.
3 Lexicons consulted are not very helpful with *nāhaḍa*, and this rendering is semi-conjectural.
4 Cf. *Ṣan'ā': an Arabian Islamic city*, ed. R.B.Serjeant & Ronald Lewcock, London, 1983, Glossary, *majbā* (pl. *majābī*), impost, tax, duty. Löfgren reads *majbāt* for my *ḥ j bāt* and I have followed this reading though this plural is not so far attested. In the Yemen *ḍjaḥab* means 'to beach, draw up on the beach' (*The Portuguese off the South Arabian coast*, Oxford, 1963/Beirut, 1974, 188) which I thought would be the correct reading in the sense of 'beaching places', with *majbā/mijbā* perhaps in the sense of customs post.
5 Cf. *The Portuguese, mūsim/mawsim*, 194.
6 *Tārīkh al-mustabṣir*, I, 144, says 70 to 80 ships used to anchor annually under Jabal Ṣīrah.
7 The writer means oppression during the reign of the Zaydī Imām Sharaf al-Dīn (ob. 965/1558) mentioned below.
8 Al-Khawr, the lagoon or bay, at al-Ḥudaydah seems to have also been the name of a little port there. Al-Jazīrah, the Island, it is clear from the remark that it faces al-Jabbānah (infra), is the island marked there on the maps and charts.
9 Sumād and al-Qaṣīrī are unknown to the standard sources consulted, but of course might be names still known to the local inhabitants.
10 From my draft list of fish names from the Aden Protectorate coasts I find the *battān* is known off the Ḥaḍramī coast. Muḥammad 'Abduh Ghanem calls it a huge fish of the shark variety. Cf. G. Ferrand, *Instructions nautiques*, II, Paris, 1925, 85b (Sulaymān al-Mahrī); A. Jahn, *Die Mehri-Sprache in Südarabien*, Wien, 1902, 269. Ibn al-Mujāwir, op. cit., II, 282 & 284, describes a sperm whale (*battān al-'anbar*) brought in to shore at Qalhāt.
11 *Ḥūt* is the ordinary south Arabian word for 'fish'.
12 *Dawrah* is not found in this sense in the standard lexicons.
13 The hand span is from the little finger to the thumb of the extended hand – this seems impossibly large; perhaps 'three' only should be read.
14 The *naqīb* may be a military officer or a tribal chief.
15 Qāḍī Ismā'īl al-Akwa' reads this verb as *'arrā*, but *'arī* was mentioned to me elsewhere. *Al-baḥr 'ārī*, infra, means that the tide was down and the shore uncovered.
16 If *bahā* is to be read here it could be the *maṣdar* of *bahiya*, *bahan*, to be completely without utensils, of a tent (Lane), but I am not at all certain of the sense here.
17 The writer of the note does not express himself clearly here, but when he states that he is governor, he probably means of al-Ḥudaydah. It is suggested that, being in authority, he did not listen but over-ruled his companions.
18 See fn. 15.
19 *Jalabah*, dhows of planks sewn together with coir (*The Portuguese*, 134).
20 *Dūtī* is clearly the same as dhoty, for which see H. Yule & A.C. Burnell, *Glossary of Anglo-Indian colloquial words and phrases*, reprint London, 1968, 314, dhootie being known in 1609, and, in 1614, dutties, such as may be fit for making and mending sails, a corge (*kawrajah*), i.e. a score, of dutties is mentioned. Maḥmūd Qārī of Yazd, *Dīwān-i albisah*, Istanbul, 1303 H., 200, mentions *dūtū*, cloth made of cotton, double, about the third quarter of the 9th/15th century. For *kandakī*, a coarse muslin, see early references in my *Islamic textiles*, Beirut, 1972. For *lātī* imported to Mocha, see *Ṣan'ā'*, 75.
21 Though not well expressed the writer seems to mean that it was the Zaydī government of the Imām Sharaf al-Dīn which oppressed al-Jazīrah; his son Muṭahhar was a warrior of renown who resisted the Ottoman invaders. He had taken Ta'izz in 941/1534-5 but the Ottomans took it in 952/1545-6.
22 *Ḥasanah* stands for *sikkah ḥasanah = dhahab*, gold coin in the context (the Ottomans minted much bad coinage in the Yemen). See *Ṣan'ā'*, 75 seq.
23 This word is discussed in *The Portuguese*, glossary, *Ṣan'ā'*, glossary.
24 *Tawwāhī*, the mooring place, from *tawwah*, to moor (*Portuguese*, 42).
25 Presumably by the Ottoman administration.
26 Hostages were taken from the tribes as surety of their good behaviour by the Rasūlids, the Zaydī Imāms and Sultans of the Aden Protectorates. In my experience their legs were fettered but otherwise they were not restricted.
27 *Ṣan'ā'*, 75.